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Costa Rican Ex-President Admits His Long CIA Role

MEXICO CITY (UPI)—Former President Jose Figueres of Costa Rica said in a televised interview broadcast Sunday that he worked for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in "20,000 ways" since it was founded.

He said he believed other Latin American presidents have also done so, but he did not mention any names.

Figueres was interviewed on the "Sunday to Sunday" program of Mexican newscaster Jacobo Zabludovsky of the televisa network. He was interviewed last week in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Figueres was not specific about the work he said he did for the CIA, although he did refer to the CIA-planned invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs and to attempts to oust the late Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo.

As to the Bay of Pigs, he said: "I tried—I was mixed up in that—I tried for two years to get it called off," Figueres said.

He also referred to his efforts—

through the so-called "Caribbean Legion" of 1947—to help overthrow of Trujillo.

"But I never wanted to resort to what later was resorted to, political assassination," he said. "I do not want to get any more explicit."

Meanwhile, Time magazine reported Sunday that it has been told by "credible sources" that the CIA was "involved in assassination plots" against Caribbean leaders Fidel Castro, Trujillo and Francois (Papa Doc) Duvalier.

The magazine said its sources contend that the CIA enlisted the expert hired-gun help of U.S. Mafia figures in several unsuccessful attempts to kill Cuban Premier Castro both before and shortly after the CIA-planned Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961.

It said the sources claimed the CIA had enlisted the help of underworld figures Sam Giancana and John Roselli in efforts to kill Castro by poison, shooting or bombs.

It said the FBI later learned of these attempts while investigating a burglary of comedian Dan Rowan's hotel room in Las Vegas. The FBI learned "the arrested prowlers had been assigned by the CIA as a favor to Giancana, who sought information to break up a budding romance between Rowan and Giancana's girlfriend, Phyllis McGuire," Time said.

The magazine said its sources claimed the CIA "backed the successful drive to overthrow" Trujillo, whose 31 years as dictator of the Dominican Republic ended with his shooting death in May, 1961.

The sources said the CIA thought Trujillo was "getting too friendly with the Communists" and so "nobody wanted another Cuba in the Dominican Republic." Time said, "Several sources insist that some of the guns

used in the killing, apparently fast-firing M-1 carbines, were smuggled into the Caribbean island by CIA operatives.

It said the CIA "collaborated with Haiti leaders of a group of at least 200 rebels" who tried unsuccessfully to overthrow Duvalier, dictator of Haiti, in 1963. It said the group of rebels was stopped at the Dominican border when they tried to invade Haiti.

Figueres, a three-time president of Costa Rica, emphasized that his work for the CIA was not limited to his own country but extended "all over Latin America" during the past 30 years—even before the CIA came formally into being in 1947.

"I have worked in 20,000 ways for them," he said.

Figueres was asked, "Is it common for Latin American presidents to collaborate with the CIA?"

"I believe so," Figueres said. "I believe so. It is a political reality as strong as the Vatican."

He said he "neither approved nor disapproved" of such actions by any Latin American president. "Politics and war are not conducted under rules laid down for nuns in convents," he said.

"This is a savage world . . . I have no illusions. I am not a man of white gloves," he added.

Although he worked for the CIA, Figueres said, he also was thwarted by them in his own plans. "I have had my telephones tapped many times by the CIA," he said. "I have had many plans of revolutionaries on which I worked frustrated by the CIA."

Nevertheless Figueres defended the CIA against its growing critics.

"There never can be enough payment to the United States as well as the Western world for the excellent espionage and counterespionage work of the CIA since it was founded by Allen Dulles."

Figueres, Jose
CIA 4 Cuba, Bay of
Pigs
CIA 4.01 ASSASSINAT
CASTRO, Fidel
Trujillo, Rafael
Duvalier, Francois
ORG 1 MAFIA
GIANCANA, Sam
Roselli, John
Rowan, Dan
CIA 3.01.7